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ABSTRACT

This report presents an analysis of characteristics of public higher education in the Denver (Colorado) metropolitan area. Items examined include current educational offerings and participation, current and projected regional demographics, and the physical capacity available for higher education. Emphasis is on trends at the Auraria campus which houses branches of the University of Colorado (Denver), the Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the Community College of Denver. Analysis suggests that the population for the metropolitan area will increase 9.6 percent by the year 2000, implying an increased demand for higher education in the area. Currently the Denver metropolitan area is served by seven public institutions. Other conclusions of the analysis relate to demographic trends in age of residents and of students at the Auraria campus; employment status of students at this campus; growth in lower division courses; student transfers from community colleges; high demand for graduate programs in business and education; Auraria's planned continued focus on academic, rather than vocational, subjects; public transportation needs; and family income of Auraria students. Options for accommodating growth and access in the metropolitan area are analyzed and include: expansion of the Auraria campus, expansion of services off-campus, moving an entire institution from Auraria, moving select programs from Auraria, and building a new campus. (CK)

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COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY, AFFORDABLE EDUCATION FOR ALL COLORADANS

REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION ISSUES IN THE DENVER METROPOLITAN AREA

FEBRUARY 1996

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Joint Budget Committee met at the Auraria Campus last summer to discuss higher education issues, including the Denver metropolitan area's higher education needs for the future. In response to a JBC directive, Colorado Commission on Higher Education staff analyzed characteristics of public higher education in the Denver area. Items examined included current educational offerings and participation, current and projected regional demographics, and the physical capacity available for higher education.

Current growth projections for the Denver-Metropolitan area indicate the population will increase 9.6 percent by the year 2000. Additionally, high school graduates will increase at a more rapid rate of 27.5 percent by the year 2000. These projections strongly suggest that demand for higher education will increase in the Denver-Metropolitan area.

The Denver-Metropolitan area is served by seven public institutions, including Arapahoe Community College, Community College of Aurora, Community College of Denver, Front Range Community College, Red Rocks Community College, Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the University of Colorado Denver. About one-third of all public college resident enrollment in the state is at one of these institutions.

The Auraria campus serves the majority of students in the metro area including about one-fifth of all public resident enrollment in the state. The campus primarily serves Colorado residents with only 4.7 percent nonresident enrollment. Total student full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) for 1994-95 is 23,641.

Several options exist for accommodating growth and access in the Denver-Metropolitan area, including expansion of the existing Auraria campus and distributiion of growth to other sites. In order to evaluate which options would be most responsive to student needs, an analysis of population and student demographics is provided. A summary of the analysis shows:

- Population growth will be highest in residents over the age of 40 and between 18 and 24. The population between the ages of 25 to 39 will decline. Denver, Arapahoe, and Adams counties are expected to show the greatest population growth among 18 to 24 year olds in the next few years.

- Enrollment growth at the Auraria campus will be driven by growth in residents 18 to 24 years of age. Growth at Auraria may be greatest five years after the boom in recent high school graduates, since Auraria institutions serve more nontraditional age students than other campuses.

- Most students attending college at the Auraria campus will be employed and will commute from home, not work, to campus.

- In the past four years, enrollment growth has been greatest in lower division FTE. Access to lower division courses in the metro area is substantial and should continue to grow under current policy that allows for state-funding of off-campus community college sites.

- Student transfers from community colleges to MSCD and UCD are growing in the metro area and are a major component of enrollment at MSCD and UCD. Expanded access to upper division courses should be provided in order to accommodate this positive trend.

- Graduate programs in business and education are higher demand disciplines in the metro area than in other areas of the state. Because these programs are a major component of private sector institutions (Regis University, University of Denver, University of Phoenix, etc.), UCD may need greater flexibility to compete in the metro area.

- Auraria institutions will continue to focus more on business, liberal arts, math and science, than on vocational programs. The Lowry Higher Education and Advanced Technology Center will expand access to workforce training in the Denver-Metro area.

- The need for public transportation access to the Auraria campus will continue at a high level, especially for CCD students. Public transportation use is likely to increase due to the recently implemented RTD pass program.

- Auraria will continue to serve students whose average family income is below the statewide average. CCD students will have incomes significantly below the statewide average.

Following the analysis, CCHE staff proposed five possible options to expand access to educational services in the Denver-Metropolitan area, including;

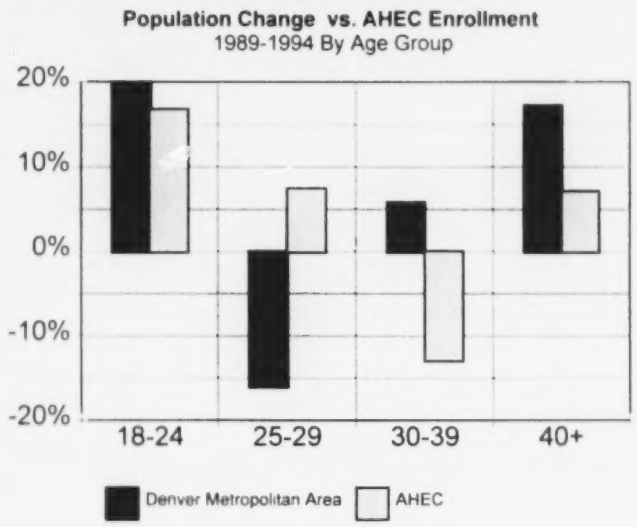
- expanding of the current Auraria campus,
- expanding services off-campus through traditional courses and technology,
- moving an entire institution from Auraria to Lowry,
- moving select programs from Auraria to Lowry, and,
- building a new campus or extension campus.

Given the demographic analysis, three of the options seem cost-effective, flexible, and responsive to student needs. The options include expansion of the current Auraria campus, expansion of off-campus offerings to include upper division and graduate courses, and relocation of select programs to Lowry. Issues surrounding the optional location for a new campus in the metro area are still in the discussion stage. This option has potential for meeting student needs, but location, range of services and management remain as significant issues to be resolved.

POPULATION GROWTH AND ENROLLMENT CHARACTERISTICS

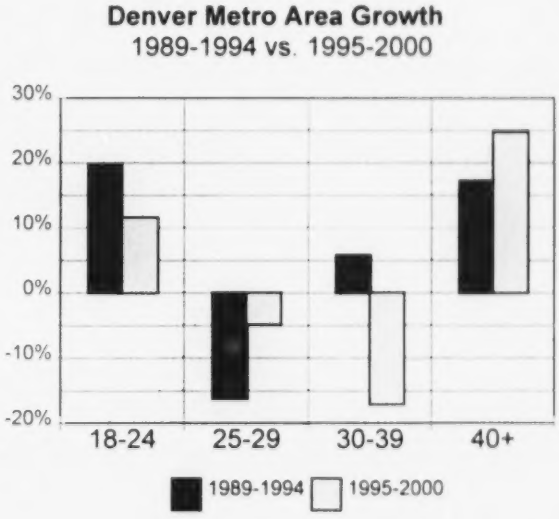
Denver-Metro Area Population Growth and Auraria Enrollment, 1989 to 1994

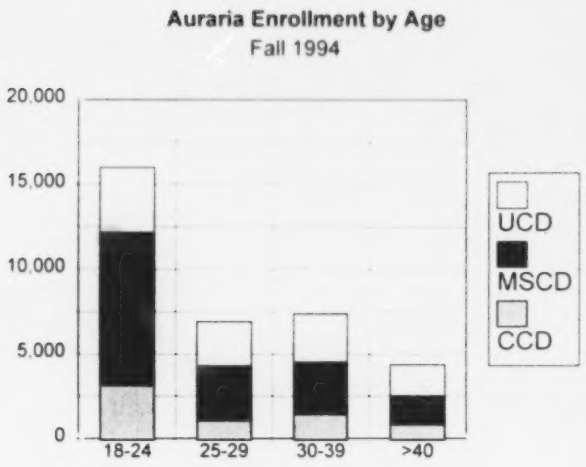
From 1989 to 1994, the over 40 age group showed the largest increase (17.2 percent). For the last five years, this group accounted for more than 50 percent of the total population increase in the Denver-Metropolitan area. The Denver-Metropolitan population has also shown strong growth in the younger population groups. The number of persons under the age of 18 has grown 9.9 percent, while the traditional age college population (18 to 24 year olds) has grown 19.7 percent. Although the 30 to 39 year-old population has grown by 5.8 percent, the 25 to 29 year-old population has decreased by 16 percent. During this time, higher education enrollment growth at the Auraria campus paralleled population growth for traditional age students and students over the age of 40. As the 25 to 29 population declined, enrollment of this age group increased at Auraria. Similarly, as the 30 to 39 population increased, Auraria enrollment in this age group decreased.



Population Trends, 1995 to 2000

The population growth trends of the last five years will likely continue, with one notable exception. The 30 to 39 year-old population is expected to decrease between 1995 and 2000. The over 40 population group is projected to continue to be the fastest growing segment of the population. The under 18 age group is expected to continue to increase 6.5 percent. The 18 to 24 year-old group is also expected in increase 11.6 percent. The 25 to 30 year-old population is expected to continue to decrease 4.7 percent and the 30 to 39 population group is projected to decrease 16.9 percent.

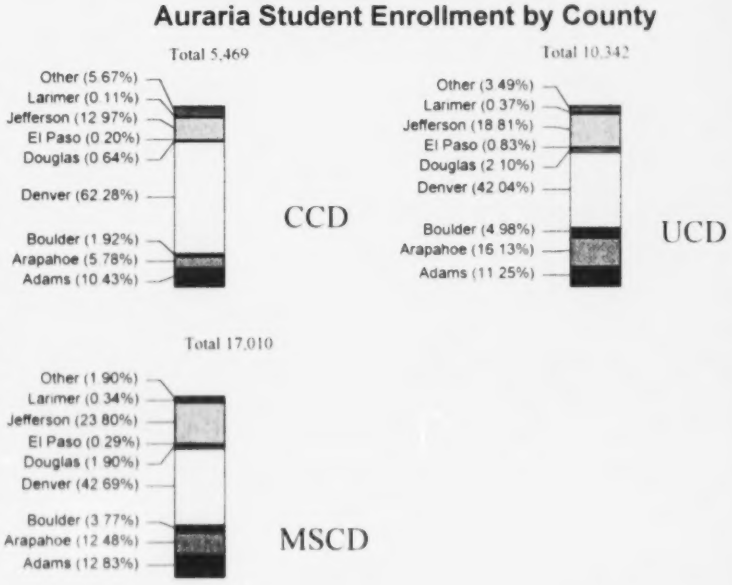




The Auraria institutions serve more nontraditional students than other institutions in the state. Recent high school graduates represent only 5.8 percent of the students attending Auraria institutions. In contrast, recent high school graduates represent 8.1 percent of total enrollment at CU-Boulder, and 13.7 percent of total enrollment at Fort Lewis College. Assuming that Auraria institutions will continue to serve their current share of recent high school graduates, growth of approximately 300 new freshmen per year is expected until 2000. Some growth is expected due to population increases among 18 to 24 year olds. Minimal growth among nontraditional age students is anticipated due to population decreases in this age group. The effects of the projected younger population growth may have a delayed effect on Auraria institutions as the younger population ages to become nontraditional students.

Student Participation by County

The Auraria campus serves the entire Denver-Metropolitan area including a high proportion of Denver residents. The Community College of Denver enrolls the highest proportion of Denver residents -- 62 percent. Metro and UCD each enroll about 42 percent Denver residents. Outside of Denver county, Arapahoe and Jefferson counties send the greatest number of students to Auraria. Metro serves the highest proportion of Jefferson county students, while UCD serves the highest proportion of Arapahoe county students.



Counties served by the Auraria campus show varying levels of projected growth. Because 54 percent of all students at Auraria institutions are between the age of 18 and 24, enrollment growth is expected from Denver, Adams, and Arapahoe counties, where population growth is greatest in this age group. Enrollment growth among nontraditional age students -- 46 percent of Auraria enrollment -- is expected to be minimal due to population decreases in the 25-39 age group in every county except Douglas.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Income

Income data is available from students who applied for financial aid (about 40 percent of all Auraria students). This data shows that the Auraria campus serves a group of students who on average have lower incomes than students statewide. The 1993-94 statewide average family income among students who applied for financial as was $24,778. CCD students had substantially lower average family incomes at $13,406. Although Metro and UCD students had higher average incomes at $20,952 and $21,608 respectively, both were still below the statewide average.

Employment

A survey done by the Regional Transportation District (RTD) showed that 80 percent of the students at Auraria were employed. Thirty-four percent were employed full-time, and 46 percent were employed part-time. Of those employed, 24 percent worked in downtown Denver.

Public Transportation Use

The RTD survey also showed that most students do not commute from work to classes. Only 15.3 percent of students surveyed left from work to commute to Auraria; 73 percent left from home. The survey further indicates that 21 percent of all Auraria students use public transportation at least once per week to get to the campus. At Metro and UCD, 17 percent of the students used public transportation at least once a week to campus. In contrast with UCD and Metro students, 38 percent of CCD students used public transportation to get to campus at least once per week, twice the rate of other Auraria students. At this level of usage, public transportation should be considered a major factor affecting students at Auraria.

Recently, a new RTD pass program was implemented at the Auraria campus. This program provides students with a bus pass for a minimal student fee. The RTD survey indicated that students' use of public transportation would double with the availability of the pass.

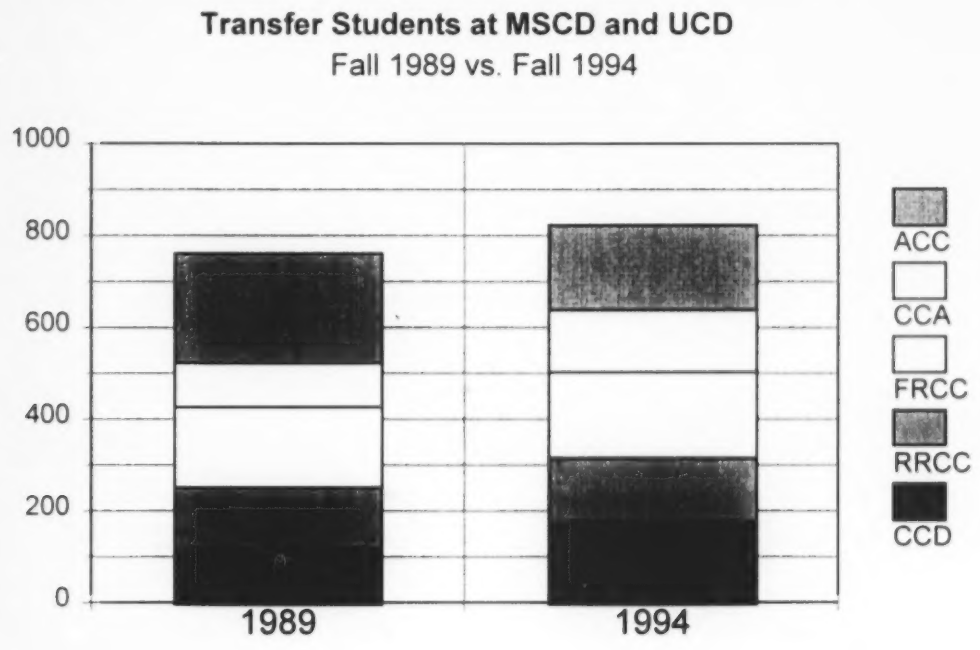
Transfer Students

More students transfer from the five metro area community colleges to MSCD and UCD than the state's other ten four-year institutions combined (823 vs. 624). In fall 1994, 36 percent of transfer students attending MSCD and UCD transferred from metro area community colleges, including 8 percent from CCD. While each of the institutions serves the same percentage of transfer students, MSCD serves a greater number of students (535 at MSCD; 288 at UCD). The ability to transfer to four-year colleges from community colleges has been increased through active efforts established by state law and CCHE policy.

Transfer from CCD to Metro and UCD

Transfers from the Community College of Denver to MSCD increased by 33 percent between fall 1989 to fall 1994. Transfers from the four other metro area community colleges to MSCD dropped by 14 percent over the same time. Transfers from the Community College of Denver

to UCD increased by 44 percent from fall 1989 to fall 1994. Transfers from the four other metro area community colleges to UCD increased by 94 percent over the same time.



Access to Higher Education in the Denver-Metro Area

Lower division (freshman and sophomore) courses are very accessible throughout the Denver-Metro area and at the Auraria campus. Five local community colleges provide lower division course work on-campus and at more than 20 off-campus sites. All community colleges have open admission standards. State funding is provided for community college to offer courses on and off campus.

MSCD and UCD also provide freshmen and sophomore courses but do not have open admission standards. These institutions receive state funding for those upper division and graduate programs and courses delivered at the Auraria campus only, unless a program has been specifically approved for off-campus delivery. Currently, only complete degree programs, not individual courses, are eligible for state funded off-campus delivery. Individual courses can be delivered on a cash-funded basis.

Enrollment Trends at the Auraria Campus

At Auraria, 62 percent of all enrollment is lower division, 29 percent is upper division, and 9 percent is the graduate level. CCD provides 21 percent of the total metro area lower division enrollment at public institutions. Over the last four years lower level enrollment at Auraria increased at a higher rate than the statewide average (16.4 percent and 12.2 percent respectively). Upper level enrollment growth at Auraria increased below the statewide average (7.5 percent and 12.5 percent respectively). The greatest increases in Auraria enrollment have been in lower division English/Communications/Foreign Language courses and graduate education.

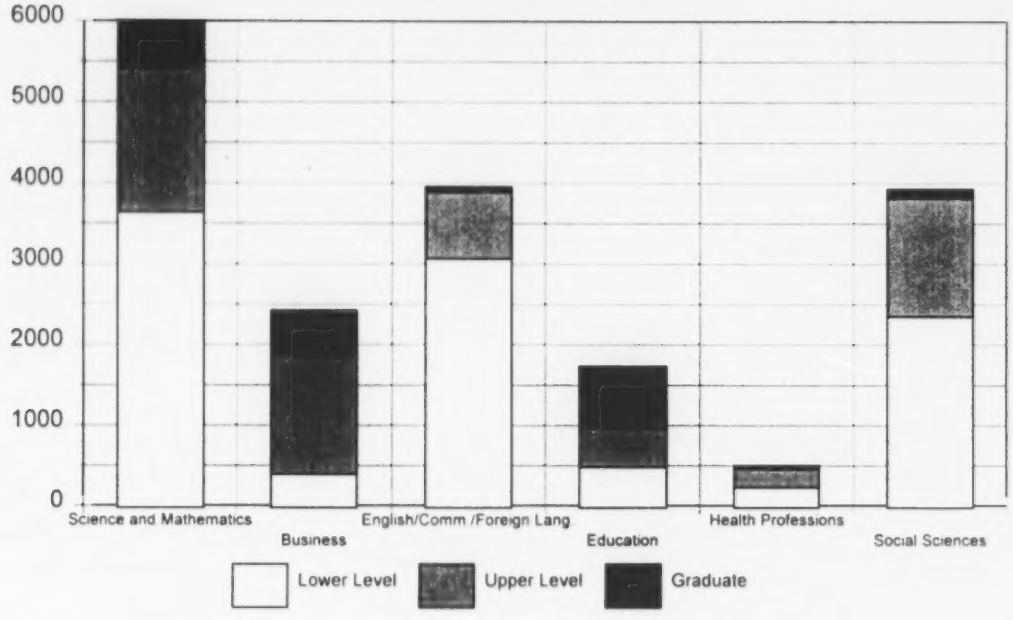
Auraria is a center for business programs and teacher education in the Denver-Metro area. Although the majority of statewide graduate enrollment is in science/math and health professions, the majority of graduate enrollment at Auraria is in education and business. Approximately 10 percent of the total enrollment for the Auraria institutions is in upper division and graduate level business courses. Although business enrollment is a major component of Auraria enrollment, enrollment in business is declining at Auraria and statewide. This trend may be influenced by competition from private institutions, such as the University of Denver, Regis University, and the University of Phoenix, which provide extensive business programs.

Vocational programs at Auraria are offered only at CCD where 36 percent of student enrollment is in vocational programs. A significant portion (46 percent) of the vocational enrollment of CCD is in business, including certificate and two-year degree programs in areas such as banking and word processing. Other areas of significant vocational enrollment include health professions (21 percent) and nursing (12 percent).

Through CCHE policy, only community colleges can receive state funding for remedial course work. The Community College of Denver provides remedial education for all three Auraria institutions. Enrollment in remedial courses accounts for 34 percent of CCD total enrollment, and is the fastest growing area statewide. Enrollment in remedial courses at Auraria increased by more than 60 percent in the last five years.

Auraria Enrollment

By Discipline and Level



In summary, population growth in the Denver-Metropolitan area, especially among 18 to 24 year olds, will cause increased demand for educational services. Population increases are expected to be strong in Denver and the suburban counties. Growth among nontraditional age students is expected to be minimal, due to the population decreases projected for 25 to 39 year olds. Access to lower division courses and programs is substantial throughout the metro area including offerings at five community colleges and twenty off-campus sites. The Auraria campus provides the major access site for baccalaureate and graduate programs and receives over one-third of all transfer students statewide. Student demographics show that all Auraria institutions, especially CCD, serve lower than average income students. Additionally, public transportation is used by one-fifth of the students at Auraria. Since the majority of students commute from home to the campus, there may be a need to expand upper division and graduate offerings to suburban areas, as well as expanding services at the main campus. The following options provide a range of expansion possibilities including increased use of the Lowry Higher Education Advanced Technology Center.

OPTIONS

Option 1 - Expand On-Campus Capacity Through Implementation of the Auraria Campus Master Plan

Current Auraria Master Plan Expansion Plans

The Auraria campus currently serves 23,641 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, 42 percent greater than the original enrollment capacity of 15,000 FTE . The 1991 AHEC master plan designated thirteen new building and building expansion sites which would create additional enrollment capacity. The attached map in Appendix A shows the planned expansion sites. The attached table summarizes current space and expansion square footage. If all thirteen Auraria master plan projects are completed, an additional 9,700 FTE students (total 32,500 FTE) could be accommodated at the current utilization rate by the year 2005.

Assumptions for Implementation of the Auraria Master Plan:

1. AHEC master plan program space needs for academic and instructional support space, measured in assignable square feet per student FTE (ASF/FTE) are applicable to the designated new building sites, and the mix of academic programs will not significantly differ from the master plan.

2. Master plan designated new building sites for limited functions, including the physical education/events center expansion, library expansion, and performing arts facilities will not be converted to classrooms, laboratories and offices to accommodate enrollment growth.

3. Existing off-campus leasing of UCD, MSCD, and CCD administrative and general offices will not be consolidated into on-campus facilities, as proposed in master plan, and current on-campus administrative office space deficits will continue.

4. Existing off-campus space leasing of UCD School of Architecture and Planning and Graduate School of Public Affairs will not be consolidated into on-campus facilities, as proposed in the master plan. Current academic space deficits will continue.

5. Existing surface parking lots displaced by new building sites can be replaced on state-owned lands west of the campus.

Although the current Auraria Master Plan provides plans for growth over the next ten years, expansion at this level may cause overcrowding and congestion. Consideration should be given to the type of environment different density policies would create. Expanding the campus to the current Master Plan capacity would result in a very high density site, second only to the Health

Sciences Center. The following table shows building square footage per acre at several campuses compared to the current and proposed Auraria campus densities.

CAMPUS	CAMPUS ACRES MAINTAINED	BUILDINGS AVG. GROSS SQ. FT.	BUILDINGS SQ. FT. PER ACRE
HSC	16.6	864,615	52,085
AHEC (Proposed)	123.0	2,370,706	19,274
MESA	30.3	478,031	15,777
AHEC (Current)	123.0	1,455,523	11,834
OTERO	16.5	190,199	11,527
UCB	410.0	4,118,543	10,045
ADAMS	72.0	483,937	6,721
UCCS	61.1	348,759	5,708
UNC	275.0	1,337,424	4,863
USC	166.0	618,779	3,728
WESTERN	143.0	437,644	3,060
CSM	373.0	1,000,398	2,682
FLC	143.0	363,691	2,543
TOTALS	1952.5	13,702,176	7,018

The advantages of this option include a centralized campus that is accessible by public transportation, offering an entire range of educational services available at one location, using the current administrative and academic infrastructure.

Possible drawbacks to this option include potential overcrowding and congestion resulting from Auraria master plan completion and business development in lower downtown Denver.

Option 2 - Expand off-campus funding policy

The current CCHE state-funded, off-campus policy provides funding for **degree programs** to move from Auraria to an off-campus site. In addition, the policy provides funding for all off-campus **courses and degree programs** at community colleges. In order for off-campus enrollment to be eligible for state funding, four-year colleges and universities must provide entire degree programs; individual courses are not eligible for state funding. Recent revisions of the policy target funding toward high demand/high need programs including:

- Programs that address shortages in certain types of employment or Colorado workforce needs;
- Programs developed in collaboration with K-12 education to address the professional development needs of K-12 educators;
- Programs that can be appropriately offered at the Lowry Higher Education Center; and
- Programs in rural areas (in counties not defined as "urban").

Additional policy changes could be made to provide funding to move junior and senior level **courses** to off-campus sites. Ideally, the junior and senior level courses would be offered at or near community colleges to take advantage of transfer opportunities.

Since the majority of students commute to Auraria from home, the advantages of off-campus expansion would provide greater access for suburban residents and reduce Auraria congestion. This option has relatively low start up costs, assuming that community colleges, high schools, or leased facilities are used. This option has been successfully implemented on a limited basis by Arapahoe Community College and MSCD. These institutions operate a joint facility where ACC offers lower division courses and MSCD offers upper division courses.

Disadvantages may include fewer services such as child care for students at off-campus sites and reduced access to public transportation.

Additionally, off-campus delivery can be expanded through distance learning. The Commission recently abolished "service area" designations for cash-funded programs delivered in Colorado. The change was made to facilitate changes in the delivery of off-campus instruction that had mainly been used to transmit instruction to a specific site. More sophisticated forms of delivery are expected to be in wider use in the future, making geographic boundaries no longer practical. For example, instructional programs delivered through the Colorado Electronic Community College and Mind Extension University will be available throughout the entire state, as well as out-of-state.

Option 3 - Move one Auraria institution to another site

The following estimates assume that approximately 3,420 FTE at CCD would move off the Auraria campus to Lowry.

Given the current square footage and enrollment at Auraria, each FTE occupies an average of 57.2 assignable square feet. Relocation of 3,420 FTE to Lowry would provide almost 200,000 square feet, allowing for 18 percent growth for MSCD and UCD. Much of the vacated space, however, would require suitable renovation for MSCD and UCD programs.

Relocation to Lowry would result in using at least 50 percent of the total existing 474,658 sq. ft. of classroom/lab/officespace to accommodate current CCD students. Advantages to this approach include expanded downtown access to four-year and graduate programs. Access would be maintained in a central location that is highly accessible by public transpiration. Disadvantages include reduced access to public transportation for CCD students and possible reduced access to other services such as child care. This is especially problematic for CCD students since the demographic analysis showed that CCD students heavily rely on public transportation and may have limited ability to pay more for transportation as indicated by below average family incomes. Additionally, CCD provides remedial courses for all three institutions. MSCD and UCD students would have to travel off-campus for remedial courses or state policy would need to be revised to allow MSCD and UCD to offer remedial courses.

Option 4 - Move select programs

A careful assessment of appropriate programs for relocation to Lowry could expand space and/or relieve current Auraria overcrowding. The optimal programs to move are those consistent with the focus of the Lowry Higher Education Advanced Technology Center to develop a workforce training and high technology education center. Because the majority of vocational and workforce training programs are at CCD, the evaluation of appropriate programs for relocation should include efforts to minimize the impact on students who are dependent on public transportation and other Auraria student services. Advantages of this option include possible improvement of workforce training and vocational programs through the planning and development of a dedicated Lowry site, while relieving overcrowded Auraria conditions. Vacated space from vocational programs probably would, however, require renovation to be suitable for use by MSCD and UCD programs.

Option 5 - Build a new campus or an extension campus

Another option is to direct growth to a new campus in the Denver-Metro area. Although there has been discussion of a community college site in Douglas County, the proposal has been evaluated as an extension site for Arapahoe Community College. In order to redirect growth from the Auraria campus, the new campus would need to offer an entire array of courses and programs, including upper division and graduate education.

In December 1994, the Commission evaluated the need for expansion in Douglas County. Douglas County does not currently have a permanent community college facility. ACC currently operates small off-campus sites in Parker and Castle Rock. Consolidation of these sites to a single location caused access concerns among some residents. In addition, there has been discussion about providing upper level and graduate programs at the Douglas County site.

The Commission considered whether there was sufficient new enrollment demand projected to justify significant state investment in a new campus[1].

Because no specific site was under consideration at the time of Commission review, the Commission decided to wait for a specific site to be chosen before taking additional action. Ongoing discussions with Arapahoe Community College include the location, range of services, and management structure for the proposed new facility.

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[1] CCHE uses the Florida "Criteria for the Establishment of New Public Colleges and Universities" to determine the feasibility of building a new campus. There is not enough information about the Douglas County proposal to provide a complete evaluation at this time.

CONCLUSIONS

The future educational needs of the Denver-Metropolitan area may best be met through a combination of strategies that would 1) serve low income students needing access to a central urban campus, 2) respond to a growing suburban population that does not need a full array of student services and may prefer a location closer to home or alternative delivery mechanisms, and 3) make optimal use of the Lowry site.

Option one, expansion of the Auraria campus, is essential to maintain a centrally accessible urban campus that provides a comprehensive set of programs and services for students of all ages and income levels. Expansion should, however, diversify to allow for growth at off-campus sites such as Lowry and suburban locations near community colleges. This approach would reduce the anticipated density and congestion that would result if all growth over the next ten years is directed at the Auraria campus. Options two and four provide the most flexibility for expansion and the lowest cost capital investment.

Option two, expanding off-campus funding to allow some upper division courses to be delivered at or near community college sites, is a low cost flexible approach to expanding access and relieving congestion at the Auraria campus. This option could be implemented at select sites where cost-effective space is available or through distance learning with minimal capital investment per student.

Option three, moving CCD to the Lowry site, is not advisable at this time. In addition to the space required to accommodate current CCD students, there are significant concerns about the Lowry site's ability to meet the needs of the CCD population. These include access via public transportation and child care facilities.

Option four, moving select programs from Auraria to the Lowry Higher Education Advanced Technology Center would also provide a cost-effective solution to relieving congestion at Auraria, provided the remodeling costs are lower than new construction costs at Auraria. Program relocation must be carefully evaluated to assure that access is maintained for low income students.

Option five, construction of a new or extension campus, is under consideration by the Commission. More information on the educational needs of growing counties, such as Douglas, however, needs to be collected. In addition, a site must be selected.

REFERENCES

Regional Transportation District - Auraria Campus Survey
April 1993 - Prepared by The Howell Research Group

Student Unit Record Data System (SURDS) - includes student demographic data supplied by all public institutions

Campus budget documents - includes enrollment by level and discipline and acres maintained and square footage at each campus.

"Criteria for the Establishment of New Public Colleges and Universities" Florida Higher Education Planning Commission.